

~~<Regional Queensland, Jobs~~

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (12.43 pm): I rise today to talk about the thing that gets me up every morning right here in Queensland, and that is delivering jobs in regional Queensland. That is what the Palaszczuk government is all about. One of the great, innovative programs that is delivering jobs—thousands of jobs, in fact—for the regions is our \$200 million Works for Queensland program. I am excited about this program because it lives up to its name. It works for Queensland and it is getting Queenslanders working. As I travel around the state in my role as the Assistant Minister for Infrastructure, I see how this program is already making a huge difference to local communities. This was clear on a recent road trip to Emerald and the Central Highlands with the Deputy Premier when we visited one of these projects at the Emerald Botanic Gardens. The botanic gardens are the jewel in Emerald's crown and it was great to join Mayor Kerry Hayes and Councillor Megan Daniels to see how Works for Queensland will deliver new walk and cycling paths, solar lighting and landscaping to make it even better.

These are stories that we are hearing all over the state—from sealing roads and delivering playgrounds in my community of Gladstone to getting the mighty Mary Valley Rattler running again in Gympie to critical water infrastructure in remote Indigenous communities in Far North Queensland. These programs are transforming our state. While they may seem small, the difference they make is enormous. It is community infrastructure like pools, parks and libraries that make our regional communities such great places to live. Communities across the state are benefiting with a total of a massive 723 projects funded through this program.

The brilliant thing about Works for Queensland is that it serves a double duty—generating jobs and upgrading important community infrastructure. The full \$200 million was allocated across 65 regional councils on the basis of population and local unemployment, providing a boost to every regional community, town and city. That is the really smart thing about this program: it was specifically designed to deliver jobs where they are needed most, and that is in regional Queensland.

It is also a program that recognises the incredibly important role that local councils play, especially in regional Queensland. We know that when the state government and local councils collaborate we can deliver projects that are really going to benefit our own communities. That is why we worked closely with the LGAQ to establish and design this program so that councils could get the most benefit out of it. Together we know that we can stimulate local economies and we can build and upgrade great infrastructure for the benefit of all Queenslanders. Do not just take my word for it. Councils across Queensland are singing its praises. Banana Shire Council Mayor Nev Ferrier said—

This is the best funding program I have seen in 13 years in Local Government—council can deliver projects that we always seem never to have enough money to do.

Western Downs Regional Council Mayor Paul McVeigh said—

The real beauty of the Works for Queensland package is about creating jobs. This funding is to be used on projects that immediately create jobs. It is really very exciting, not only do we have the opportunity to boost jobs across our region but also deliver key projects for our communities.

These are just two of dozens of endorsements that we are hearing across the state because our councils know it is working. By working together with councils, we were able to fast track the rollout of this program. In just four short weeks we were able to assess and fund all of these projects, meaning more jobs sooner right across Queensland. We know that Queenslanders want jobs, not red tape, and that is what this program delivers. This program is what our government is all about—great infrastructure and real jobs for our regions. I am proud to be part of a government that is delivering that right here in Queensland.→

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! That concludes matters of public interest.

<EDUCATION (ACCREDITATION OF NON-STATE SCHOOLS) BILL

Message from Governor

 **Hon. KJ JONES** (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism, Major Events and the Commonwealth Games) (12.48 pm): I present a message from His Excellency the Governor.→

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Crawford): The message from His Excellency recommends the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*. The contents of the message will be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*. I table the message for the information of members.

~~Tabled paper: Message, dated 9 May 2017, from his Excellency the Governor, recommending the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill 2017.~~

Introduction

Hon. KJ JONES (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism, Major Events and the Commonwealth Games) (12.49 pm): I present a bill for an act to provide for the accreditation of non-state schools, and deciding the eligibility of non-state schools' governing bodies for government funding for the schools, to repeal the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2001 and to amend this act, the Building Act 1975, the Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act 1999, the Child Protection Act 1999, the Education and Care Services Act 2013, the Education and Care Services National Law (Queensland) Act 2011, the Education (Capital Assistance) Act 1993, the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006, the Education (Overseas Students) Regulation 2014, the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005, the Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Act 2014, the Education (Work Experience) Act 1996, the Environmental Protection Act 1994, the Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008, the Grammar Schools Act 2016, the Planning Act 2016, the Public Guardian Act 2014, the Public Health Act 2005, the Public Health (Medicinal Cannabis) Regulation 2017, the Residential Services (Accreditation) Act 2002, the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008, the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998, the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Regulation 2005, the Weapons Act 1990, the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Education, Tourism, Innovation and Small Business Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill 2017.

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Tabled paper: Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill 2017, explanatory notes.

Non-state schools play an important role in Queensland's educational system, offering a diverse range of quality educational options in Catholic and independent schooling sectors. Non-state schools support the right of parents to choose the school they believe is best for their child or is consistent with their personal values or faith. There are currently 504 accredited non-state schools that provide education to approximately 266,000 students. The Non-State Schools Accreditation Board, otherwise known as the board, established under the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2001, has responsibility for accrediting non-state schools in Queensland. The board is doing a great job in upholding the standard of non-state schooling in Queensland and ensuring the sector has the confidence of the public. It is well regarded and supported by the non-state schooling sector.

Given that the present accreditation and government funding eligibility schemes for non-state schools have been operating since the beginning of 2002, I have taken the opportunity to identify improvements to the schemes, streamline them and modernise the legislation. The review was informed by a reference group comprising departmental officials, the executive directors of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission, Independent Schools Queensland and the chair of the board. This bill is the product of this review and has the general support of the QCEC, ISQ and the board.

Mr Seeney: You said 'compromising'. You meant 'comprising'.

Ms JONES: Comprising. I never compromise. Thank you for pointing that out. I have never been compromised in my life. I can assure the member of that. Can I put on the public record, given that Jeff is retiring at the end of this year, that he has always looked after me in this House and I thank him for that.

This bill is the product of this review and has the general support of the QCEC, ISQ and the board. The bill maintains the current regulatory regime for non-state schools with some important reforms.

In relation to the board, the bill continues the establishment of the board as a statutory body, with administrative support provided by a secretariat staffed with departmental employees. This structure has been in place since the establishment of the board and is a cost-effective way to support the operation of the regulatory body. The board has seven members appointed by the Governor in Council comprising: a chair nominated by me as the responsible minister; three members representing each of the schooling sectors; and three members who are nominated by me following consultation with the non-state sector peak bodies. The membership structure of the board will continue unchanged under the bill.

As the Minister for Education, I currently decide on a non-state school's eligibility for Queensland government funding, based upon the recommendation of the Non-State Schools Eligibility for

Government Funding Committee—the funding committee. The decision is based on criteria prescribed in the accreditation act around need, choice, impact on other schools and projected minimum enrolment numbers. This is a lengthy and complex process.

The board must first decide that a governing body is operating the school in a not-for-profit manner and refer the matter to the funding committee, which considers a detailed report from the governing body. The governing body must also undertake a public notification process inviting public submissions on the prescribed criteria. The funding committee then makes a recommendation to me as the minister, and I make the decision about the governing body's eligibility for government funding. This is separate from detailed consideration by the board of the governing body's application to address the accreditation criteria.

When considering outcomes from the current processes, it is notable that all existing non-state schools receive funding for at least some of the years of schooling they provide. Only a small percentage of students are unfunded. As at August 2016, approximately 77 students in seven schools did not attract state government funding. This equates to 0.03 per cent of the non-state school student population.

The bill provides for a streamlined process for eligibility for government funding. This is something that I know that the sector very much welcomes. A governing body will be automatically eligible for government funding for a school upon its accreditation, provided the board is satisfied the school will not be operated for profit. To decide the not-for-profit status of a school, the board will consider relationships between the school's governing body and third parties to determine if the governing body is independent in its financial decision making. There will no longer be a funding committee or a public notification requirement. However, the board will publish on its website details of all applications for accreditation and notify the state, independent and Catholic peak bodies of the applications.

There are also streamlining processes. The bill also streamlines processes by removing the concept of provisional accreditation. A school can be accredited from the outset if the governing body is suitable and if the board considers the school will comply with the accreditation criteria from commencement of the school's operation.

A governing body is not currently required to notify the board when directors of the governing body change. The board is required to assess whether the governing body is suitable, which includes the directors having a blue card. To ensure currency of blue cards, the board writes annually to all governing bodies requesting an update in their directorships. This is an onerous task and means the status of the directors is not known to the board in a timely manner. The bill includes a new requirement that a governing body must notify the board about changes in directorship and, if a director is commencing with the governing body, provide a copy of any new director's blue card.

There are also a number of changes with regard to the operation of a school without accreditation, better ways with regard to information sharing and also review rights. There has been wide consultation on the bill and it has very broad support from the board, QCEC and ISQ. These stakeholders have been advocating for these changes for some time. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Hon. KJ JONES (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism, Major Events and the Commonwealth Games) (12.56 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

~~Referral to the Education, Tourism, Innovation and Small Business Committee~~

~~Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Crawford): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Education, Tourism, Innovation and Small Business Committee.→~~

<PRIVILEGE

~~Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House by a Member~~